

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

CHERYL SAGATAW, DEANTHONY
BARNES, ROBERTA STRONG, and
TRAVIS NELOMS, *on behalf of
themselves and a class of
similarly-situated individuals,*

Plaintiffs,

vs.

MAYOR JACOB FREY, *in his
individual and official capacity,*

Defendant.

Civil Action No.
0:24-cv-00001-ECT/TNL

**DECLARATION OF
JANET MARIE COURT
IN SUPPORT OF SECOND
MOTION FOR TEMPORARY
RESTRAINING ORDER**

DECLARATION OF JANET MARIE COURT

I, Janet Marie Court, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare as follows:

1. My name is Janet Marie Court and I am 84 years old.
2. I was born in Minneapolis and I've lived in the twin cities area almost my whole life. I'm of European descent but have learned a lot from Native family members. My step grandmother is Dakota, when my mother died my dad married her best friend who is Metis, and my aunt Vera who I am very close to is Arapaho. I'm not Native, but I've been around Native culture my whole life. So I know that there are other ways to do things, and I've learned about the ways that colonization impacts Native populations, divides people, turns them against each other, and facilitates extraction and displacement all over the world.
3. I was involved first with the Urban Farm Project, where I met Nicole through a mutual friend. That project was a group of people who were fighting for eight years to convert a building into a community center and an urban farm. The City wanted to take that building and tear it down and make it a refueling station for diesel trucks. That would have added even more pollution to the area. Eventually, we stopped that demolition and obtained the land for the community project.
4. I'm a volunteer with the Democratic Socialists of America. My role is to liason between the DSA and councilmember Jason Chavez specifically on issues of environmental justice. I live in South Minneapolis in Jason's district.
5. I first heard about Nenookaasi when it was located on 23rd Street from Nicole and ever since November of 2023 myself and other volunteers from DSA have started coming here every Sunday. I myself have been here at least ten or twelve times, probably more. When I'm here, I wash dishes, help with chores around camp, visit with people, sit by the fire, put tobacco in the fire, say prayers.
6. Being at camp gives me joy. To see the relatives, to see people gaining confidence in themselves. To see people begin to know that they're valuable. To see people healing. Camp is a living example of decolonization, it's showing the world that there is a different way to live, that people don't have to be against each other or in competition, that people who are self medicating with drugs or alcohol or struggling with mental illness are still valuable and can get well and regain their dignity. I believe in the goodness of people.
7. This camp exists because it is working. People are here because they feel safe here, they know they can get better here, get stronger, heal. This camp has an incredible reputation amongst people who are in other encampments or on the streets. There are so many

people who want to be here but can't because this camp is at capacity, Nicole is turning people away. A few days ago, a young man came in and asked to stay, Nicole said that unfortunately the space was full, so the young man said that he was going to go back to the camp he was at and try to be the Nicole of that camp, to make his encampment safe like this one. To tell the people at his encampment that they could choose to create a safer environment if that was important to them.

8. When the mayor breaks up a camp people scatter and then supporters can't find the people they were working with. Unhoused people who are scattered by evictions start having to use dirty needles, lose relationships with housing workers and placements on lists and in line for resources, and experience higher rates of overdose, illness, and other hardships.
9. The system of ongoing evictions where people are moved around makes it harder for workers to find their clients, this system of repeated evictions seems like it is designed *not* to work. Many shelters are a part of that system that doesn't work, in particular when they offer one piecemeal type of support but nothing holistic. Especially for young men there isn't anything in shelters that resembles stability. There's 80 beds in the morning but 120 people looking for a bed at night, that isn't stability its competition. Also, I think that a lot of the nonprofits end up fostering dependence instead of creating a feeling in people that they can do things for themselves. Nenookaasi fosters independence. People are encouraged to be resourceful here and work to solve their problems.
10. Camp Nenookaasi helps me learn and study decolonization. I am taking a class through my church on decolonization, and I can see the ways people are practicing that here through supporting each other, being resilient, making do with things. Look at the yurts, people have shelters they can take down and put back up, and everyone works together to build them.
11. Everyone here has their own goals, whether it is to get clean from drugs or to reunite with their families, to be strong and able to help others, to be admired.
12. I've been at all three evictions of Camp Nenookaasi since I started coming here in November. The first eviction was January 4, 2024, from the 23rd Street location. At that eviction, when I first arrived at 6AM in the dark I sat and waited for two hours. I wanted to be present at the eviction because I wanted to let the city know that what they were doing was wrong, and I wanted to help the relatives pack. We knew we couldn't stop it, but we thought it was important to be there to help in any way that we could. I didn't have any interactions with law enforcement that I can remember at the first eviction. Law enforcement were more hands off than at later evictions, allowing people to come in and help. I did not see or hear about a single person from the homeless response team offering to take people's belongings to put in storage. People were putting their belongings in

garbage bags and labeling them, supporters were helping carry things into u-hauls and vehicles. Through all of these evictions, the volunteers and supporters have been doing all of the transporting of belongings and driving people who are able to find placements at shelter and housing.

13. The City has not done a damn thing that they've said they were going to do. Nicole, Elias, and other volunteers have been doing all of this. Driving people to shelters and housing placements, to AVIVO. It's been the camp people and the community supporters that have been taking care of residents, not the city or the homeless response team. It makes me angry when the City tries to take credit for what the people at this camp have done for themselves and each other.
14. At the second eviction, from 26th Street, that was the eviction with so many cops. There wasn't any warning for this eviction. We didn't know it was going to happen that day, nobody knew, until the city workers started putting up barricades at 8:30 in the morning. That was on January 30th. The police came later. The police chief was there and about six other people who were top brass, either associate or deputy chiefs, plus about ninety other members of law enforcement. I was inside helping Nicole, standing next to her while she was talking to the police chief and the lieutenant about how the eviction was unlawful and there was no notice. Originally, the law enforcement were saying that everyone only had ninety minutes to clear out and then law enforcement was coming in. They had a sound thing, an LRAD device, ready to use on people, ten feet from the entrance to the camp that they would blare if people didn't leave in ninety minutes. Then, more and more volunteers and community supporters arrived so law enforcement realized they could not get away with intimidating the residents because there were so many witnesses. And then, the law enforcement changed their position and said "as long as people are still moving and making progress they can have more time."
15. I started helping with loading the firewood, but then I fell down and dropped some firewood, which embarrassed the law enforcement who were watching me and so then they actually started helping and they were loading the firewood.
16. During this eviction, there was one man who lived at the encampment but who had left that morning prior to the barricades being set up, and he returned to find that he was blocked from accessing his shelter. The police wouldn't allow him back in at first, they eventually relented but he had to walk all the way around to the other side to ask another officer to let him in. Law enforcement along the perimeter were being brutal, they wouldn't let volunteers in to help carry things out or to bring vehicles to transport people and belongings, and they were intimidating people.
17. During this second eviction, I did not see anyone from the Homeless Response Team or hear anyone offering to store people's stuff downtown. Nobody from the city was telling

people where they could sleep that night, or store belongings. The numbers quoted by the city and media about how many shelter beds are available are miscalculated and inaccurate. I've tried to help get people into shelters and the shelters have consistently been full, people have to sleep on the floor if they get a place at all.

18. The third eviction was February 1, 2024. That camp was on 2213 16th Avenue. I took the bus to camp and when I got there the camp was cordoned off. There was a group of ten supporters waiting to come help residents pack up and move but law enforcement wouldn't let anyone in. Another woman and I decided to just walk in and a law enforcement officer came and stopped us, but then when we explained what we were doing we eventually were given permission to go help. It was arbitrary, who was let in.
19. For this eviction, there were slightly fewer police, but there still was about an eight block area cordoned off like with the prior eviction. And also like the prior eviction, there was nobody from the Homeless Response Team offering storage or any other people from the city connecting people with a place to sleep or a way to store belongings. The people from the camp, organizers and supporters, were the only ones working to get people a place to be and put their things.
20. The first eviction was the hardest because people had been at that camp the longest, so it really felt for people like their lives were being torn. With more evictions, people aren't able to get established. Whatever people were able to bring along from eviction to eviction is smaller over time.
21. As a supporter watching these evictions, I am angry to see how the Mayor treats people. I feel that he does not care about the people in Minneapolis. I am going to be working to prevent him from being reelected.
22. I do not experience the conditions at this camp that the Mayor talks about to justify the evictions. The few problems that the camp has had, they have handled better than I see most other communities handle similar issues. I have never felt unsafe, I always feel accepted and loved here, it is not dirty. I was at camp the night that TeBone was murdered. I came after his death, that same night. My experience with the police that night was that the police were being more respectful than usual. The policeman I talked to that was on the perimeter helped me go find the relatives I was looking for after they were evacuated from the camp. He was polite and answered my questions. They handled the situation in the same way as they would handle the same situation happening at an apartment building. Unfortunately, that respect was not a lasting change. At the first eviction, I realized that the law enforcement weren't going to continue with their respectful, helpful manner and that respect was not going to become a policy.
23. I wanted to give this declaration because I want to see people treated with respect. I want to see Nicole get a Nobel Peace Prize. I feel very sorry for the people who have to work

under Mayor Frey because I know that a lot of his employees are thinking about leaving because it's so stressful working under conditions at his office, being asked to be cruel to people. Many people work for the city because they care, but they are being asked to carry out a cruel policy.

I declare under penalty of perjury that this declaration is true and correct.

Executed on February 4, 2024, in the City of Minneapolis, County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota, Treaty-Ceded Territory of the Dakota peoples.



Janet Marie Court